

CITY OF MIAMI BEACH

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COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor David Dermer and
Members of the City Commission

Date: April 14, 2004

From: Jorge M. Gonzalez
City Manager

**Subject: REPORT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD / COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON FEBRUARY 17, 2004**

A meeting of the Neighborhood / Community Affairs Committee was held on February 17, 2004 at 3:30 p.m. in the City Manager's Large Conference Room. Commissioners in attendance: Matti Herrera Bower, Simon Cruz, Saul Gross, and Richard Steinberg. City staff in attendance: Jorge M. Gonzalez, City Manager; Vivian P. Guzman, Director, Neighborhood Services Department; Kevin Smith, Director, Parks and Recreation Department; Floyd Jordan, Fire Chief; Ed Del Favero, Assistant Fire Chief; Eric Yuhr, Assistant Fire Chief; Ramiro Inguanzo, Chief of Staff; Vincent Andreano, Beach Patrol Captain. Others in attendance are listed in the attached sign-in sheet. Commissioner Matti Herrera Bower was selected as Chairperson for this committee.

OLD BUSINESS

**1. DISCUSSION REGARDING PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE EXISTING
DEBARMENT AND LOBBYING ORDINANCES.**

Item deferred to the next Neighborhood/Community Affairs Committee meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

**2. DISCUSSION REGARDING THE TRANSFER OF BEACH PATROL FROM THE
PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT TO THE FIRE DEPARTMENT.**

Mr. Robert Middaugh, Assistant City Manager, opened the discussion and reviewed the two options regarding the future of Beach Patrol. The option recommended and endorsed by the Administration moves the Beach Patrol Division from Parks and Recreation Department to the Fire Department with Beach Patrol remaining a division. Beach Patrol is requesting to be their own stand alone department known as Ocean Rescue Services Department. The attached memorandum is a synopsis of the analysis and the Administration's conclusion that the best option for Beach Patrol long term in order to accomplish the objectives of concern to the City, the citizens, and the Beach Patrol itself, is within the Fire Department. Both options seem to achieve the same objective of raising the bar for the public safety focus that is the Beach Patrol, however with a stand alone department there are additional administrative costs and duplication of resources that the Administration believes will not provide additional value whereas the Fire Department option allows a much

easier transition.

Assistant Fire Chief Ed Del Favero reviewed the history of Beach Patrol and its own review of the move to create the division of the Fire Department (see presentation attached).

Commissioner Saul Gross questioned that if the moving of the Beach Patrol over as a division of the Fire Department is such a great idea, then why was there such resistance early on. Assistant Chief Del Favero responded that the Fire Department never resisted the idea and that Commissioner Luis R. Garcia, Jr. brought this idea up some time ago and it is just now being offered to the Department. It was actually given to the Department for review in September 2003 and the benefit was immediately obvious.

Mr. Middaugh reiterated that there doesn't seem to be any disagreement in terms of the goals that everyone is trying to accomplish, that the end result is a higher functioning Beach Patrol, improved level of service and better resources. He also made note that the discussion about Beach Patrol is how to improve and should not imply that it is not well run or that it is a bad organization. Beach Patrol has reached its current level and we are now discussing how their abilities can be enhanced by an organizational restructuring. This is not a negative on the Parks and Recreation Department.

Richard McKinnon, President of Communication Workers of America (CWA) Local 3178 and lifeguard with the City of Miami Beach, submitted a letter on their position (attachment) and spoke on the issue.

Commissioner Matti Herrera Bower asked if there is a cost analysis of the two options being discussed. The concern is added cost, systems such as payroll and procurement processes that would have to be duplicated in a stand alone department. Additional expenses in managerial and supervisory costs are also involved. The Administration's issue is that these additional expenses do not add any value when compared to placing the Beach Patrol in a successful, well structured, well run Fire Department with a very common purpose, mission, and set of principles.

Commissioner Simon Cruz confirmed that the Beach Patrols in Hollywood, Ft. Lauderdale, and Miami-Dade County all went to the Fire Department as opposed to a stand alone department. Mr. Jorge M. Gonzalez, City Manager, added that San Diego also had moved to the Fire Department. Commissioner Cruz asked Mr. McKinnon why he thinks these other municipalities went with this model instead of stand alone departments. Joseph McManus, Beach Patrol and CWA representative, responded that he doesn't believe they have the same size, scope, climate, visitation, preventions, or drownings as Miami Beach. Adding that Miami Beach is in a league of its own and that although these are large organizations, they are very seasonal as to whether there are people in the water. Many of their lifeguards are seasonal in these locations, very few are full-time.

Commissioner Bower asked of the Beach Patrol representation what they believe will be achieved as a stand alone department. Mr. Gonzalez interjected that the

Administration met and has been working well at trying to come up with a mutually agreeable arrangement. That morning they had a long conversation and mutually agreed upon goal being the best lifeguard department with zero drownings.

Commissioner Steinberg described his observation that in the lifeguards/CWA view their concerns are related to their budget. As a division within the Fire Department they feel that lesser priority will be given and funding affected. He went on to say that the Administration's view is that with a separate department, the additional cost does not bring additional benefit. Commissioner Steinberg questioned the feasibility of the a separate budget for an Ocean Rescue Division appearing within the Fire Budget so that funding decisions for the Fire Department and the Ocean Rescue Division would each be clearly visible and any cross impacts reduced.

Mr. McManus stated that the lifeguards/CWA believe that the fastest, most expeditious means to address and correct the continuing problem with drownings on Miami Beach is to create a stand alone department, reporting directly to the City Manager and that this will not incur much more cost and referred to the attached Ocean Rescue Services Departmental Organizational Chart. Mr. Gonzalez stated that his proposal of joining the Fire Department could start in April and that would be the fastest. Fire Chief Floyd reminded that the Fire Department's main focus is the same, safety.

Commissioners Cruz and Bower asked for cost analysis for the two choices as a decision cannot be made without the financial information.

Action: The Administration is to bring the item to the next meeting of the Neighborhood/Community Affairs Committee along with a report of the cost associated with creating a stand alone department and a procedure if it is moved into the Fire Department.

3. DISCUSSION REGARDING POTENTIAL ENHANCEMENTS TO THE PINE TREE BARK PARK.

Mr. Robert Middaugh, Assistant City Manager, opened the discussion with an overview of the potential expansion of the heavily used Bark Park currently located at Pine Tree Park. The City has been approached with a donation to expand the park to a larger configuration. The proposed expansion would allow the Bark Park to grow within the existing paved sidewalk allowing for more space for the dogs to roam. A resident has offered the City \$25,000.00 to get Phase 1 improvements in place which would include the additional fencing and some interior amenities including a water fountain. Future plans would be, as money becomes available, to further enhance with doggie plazas and other types of amenities. The proposed design would allow the park to serve the desires for the expanded Bark Park users while enabling others to utilize the central green space, walking path, and still allowing access to the water. The existing fenced in area would be used for smaller dogs, separate from the new area for larger dogs.

Commissioner Bower asked if there are facilities in existence for children at this park as there are many in the area. There are several other parks in the area including

Muss Park, 63rd, 51st, and 46th streets. Kevin Smith, Director, Parks and Recreation Department, informed the group that at one time the City attempted to get a tot lot in this park but it was not well received by the area residents. Commissioner Bower requested that when this proposal is brought to the community that the idea of a tot lot be discussed since the demographics may have changed since its earlier proposal. Mr. Smith stated that the park was purchased jointly with the City and Miami-Dade County and there may be some restrictions with regard to use. The agreement originally stated that the park's use would be passive activity meaning that there is no structured amenity or organizational activity but he would be happy to research it.

Commissioner Gross confirmed that the proposed expansion has not been taken to the neighborhood and that the next step should be to do just that. Commissioner Bower expressed concerns that such a large portion of the park will be dedicated to dogs. This project has been discussed with the Parks & Recreation Board and they expressed concerns with design issues including finding a way to control the public parking area access into the park so that people wouldn't just get out of their cars and let their dogs run as they do now. Commissioner Steinberg addressed the current adequacy of the parking lot. Mr. Middaugh answered that there will probably be a need for future expansion in that area. Commissioner Gross expressed that he would not like to see losing more green space to an expansion of the parking lot.

Commissioner Gross asked that the proposed changes be posted in the park for at least one week announcing a scheduled neighborhood meeting to discuss the issue.

Commissioner Bower added that the meeting should be advertised in the paper for those residents in the neighborhood that may not utilize the park but do have an interest in what is done here.

Action: Item is to be brought back to the next meeting of the Neighborhood/Community Affairs Committee with a report of the maintenance costs involved with the proposed enhancements made to the park prior to acceptance of the donation and the comments and/or input of the neighborhood.

4. **DISCUSSION REGARDING AN ORDINANCE AMENDING MIAMI BEACH CITY CODE CHAPTER 2, ARTICLE III "AGENCIES, BOARDS AND COMMITTEES," SECTION 2-22(5) THEREOF ESTABLISHING TERM LIMITS OF BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS, BY PROVIDING THAT SAID TERM LIMITS SHOULD NOT INCLUDE TIME SERVED AS A RESULT OF HAVING FILLED A VACANCY; PROVIDING FOR REPEALER, SEVERABILITY, CODIFICATION, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

Item deferred to the next Neighborhood/Community Affairs Committee meeting.

5. **DISCUSSION REGARDING THE USE OF CHANNEL 20 TO BROADCAST PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS.** (LATE ADDITION TO MEETING)

Item deferred to the next Neighborhood/Community Affairs Committee meeting.

Attachments
JMG/RCM/VPg/rfm